



## *An Interview with General Otto Ernst Remer*



*Conducted by Stephanie Schoeman*  
*Translated by Mark Weber*

**Q: General Remer, what was your role in the Second World War?**

**A:** ... I was a front-line commander, and I led combat units throughout the war years. The only exceptions were a three-month period in Berlin as commander of the Berlin



guard regiment and another three months as commander of the bodyguard brigade of Hitler's headquarters.

Eventually I became a general and division commander. By personal order of Hitler, my division was sent into combat on the Eastern front only in the most critical areas, as a kind of fire brigade. And I remained a combat commander until the final day of the war.

**Q: What is your view of the Polish Corridor crisis and the outbreak of the war in 1939?**

**A:** In September 1944, when I was commander of the guard unit at Hitler's headquarters, I spoke with Hitler during a walk together outside. I asked him: „My Fuhrer, may I speak frankly with you for a moment?“ „Of course,“ he replied. I then asked him: „Why did you really attack Poland? Couldn't you have been more patient?“

Hitler had only asked for an extra-territorial highway and rail line across Polish territory, and he wanted the return of Danzig to the Reich. These were really very modest demands. With a bit more patience, couldn't he have obtained these, in much the same way that Austria and the Sudetenland had been united with the Reich?

And Hitler replied:

„You are mistaken. I knew as early as March 1939 that Roosevelt had determined to bring about a world war, and I knew that the British were cooperating in this, and that Churchill was involved. God knows that I certainly did not want a world war. That's why I sought to solve the Polish problem in my own way with a kind of punishment expedition, without a declaration of war. After all, there had been thousands of murders of ethnic Germans and 1.2 million ethnic German refugees. What should I have done? I had to act. And for that reason, four weeks after this campaign, I made the most generous offer of peace that any victorious leader could ever have made. Unfortunately, it wasn't successful.

And then he said: „If I had not acted as I did with regard to the Polish question, to prevent a second world war, by the end of 1942 at the latest we would have experienced what we are now experiencing in 1944.“ That's what he said.

**Q: Was Hitler too soft on England?**

**A:** ...That was a mistake of Hitler's. Hitler always pursued policies based on ideology. One result was the alliance with Fascist Italy, which ended in the betrayal by Italy. And Hitler always believed in the Nordic-Germanic race and in the Nordic people,



which included the English. That's why he made repeated offers of peace to Britain, which were always brusquely rejected. That's an important reason why we never occupied Britain, which would have eliminated Britain from the war. But for ideological reasons, Hitler did not do that, which was certainly a mistake. But, after all, who does not make mistakes?

Hitler once said to me: „Every day that this war continues keeps me from doing the work that I am still destined to accomplish for the welfare of the German people.“

He was referring to his domestic policies and programs. Hitler was terribly unhappy that he couldn't accomplish these things, but instead had to devote himself to the war. The period of peace lasted only six years, but what a great transformation was achieved during that short time!

**Q: What about Dunkirk?**

**A:** Treasonous officers, who knew about the German plan to invade Britain, which was known as operation „Sea Lion,“ reported to Hitler that a sea invasion of England was not militarily possible. They made this report, even though they knew it was not true, in order to prevent the invasion for political reasons. All this came out after the war. [Fabian von] Schlabrendorff testified to this effect at my trial.

**Q: Did you agree with Hitler's policies, particularly his policy toward Russia?**

**A:** Regarding the military campaign against the Soviet Union:

First of all, it should be clearly understood that at the time of the Balkans campaign in Yugoslavia and Greece in early 1941, when we had ten divisions on the entire length of the Soviet border, the Russians had stationed 247 major military formations on our border. After the conclusion of the Balkans campaign, we then quickly placed at most 170 major military units on the border with the Soviet Union. The Russians had readied themselves for an attack.

The initial successes of our forces against the Soviets were due to the fact that the Russians were not stationed in defense positions, but were instead positioned right at the front for attack, which made it possible for us to quickly encircle large Soviet forces. Thus, in the first weeks of the war, we were able to capture more than three million prisoners of war as well as enormous quantities of war equipment, all of which was on the frontier, positioned for attack.

That's the truth of the matter, which can be proven. I recently spoke with a Mr. Pemsel, who was a long-range aerial reconnaissance pilot. In the period before the



beginning of the Soviet campaign, he flew as far as the Don River and observed and reported on this enormous concentration of Soviet forces on the border.

I also know from my own experience in the Russian campaign, and with the Russian prisoners, about the preparations by the Soviets for an imminent attack against Europe. The Russians were hoping that we would move against Britain so that they could then take advantage of the situation to overrun Europe.

**Q: Do you believe war with the Soviet Union was inevitable following Hitler and Molotov's meeting in November 1940?**

**A:** Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov demanded the Dardanelles. That is, we were supposed to approve the turning over of foreign territory which belonged to the Turks. Molotov thus made provocative demands which simply could not be met. Hitler was also conscious of the Soviet takeover of territory in Romania, at a time of supposed peace. Hitler also knew that the anti-German uprising in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, was organized by the Soviets. It was the Russians who wrecked the relationship between Germany and the Soviet Union.

And after he received more and more reports of Soviet preparations for an attack against Germany and Europe, Hitler reacted. I am thus absolutely certain that Hitler did not originally plan to attack the Soviet Union. Instead, he acted as the changing situation demanded.

**Q: Is it true that the Germans referred to the Russians as „subhumans“?**

**A:** Nonsense! The Russians are human beings just like everyone else.

Your question, whether we called the Russians „subhumans,“ is nonsense. We had a first-class relationship with the Russian people. The only exception, which was a problem we dealt with, was with the Soviet Commissars, who were all Jews. These people stood behind the lines with machine guns, pushing the Russian soldiers into battle. And anyway, we made quick work of them. That was according to order. This was during a war for basic existence, an ideological war, when such a policy is simply taken for granted.

There was sometimes talk about the so-called Asian hordes, and ordinary soldiers sometimes spoke about subhumans, but such language was never officially used.

**Q: Wouldn't the Russians have fought with the Germans if they had not been so badly treated?**



**A:** The Russians, that is, the Ukrainians and the people from the Caucasus, volunteered to fight, but we were not in a position to take advantage of this. We didn't have enough weapons. In war, there is a lot that ideally should be done, but we simply couldn't do it.

The Arabs also wanted weapons from us so that they could liberate themselves. And the Spanish leader Franco also wanted weapons as a condition for entering the war, but we simply didn't have enough ourselves.

The German armaments program did not really get going until after the war against the Soviets was underway. We started with 3,260 tanks. That's all we had, but the Soviets had 10,000. At that time our monthly production was 35 tanks. Imagine that! It wasn't until October 1944 that we reached the high point of our production of 1,000 tanks per month. So, our monthly production of tanks went from 35 in 1941 to 1,000 in late 1944. That's quite a difference, and it's proof that we were simply not militarily prepared for a world war.

**Q: Where were you serving when the Soviet forces reached Germany?**

**A:** I was the guard commander at the Wolfsschanze, Hitler's headquarters in East Prussia. I was there with part of my unit. It was still being organized, and wasn't yet ready. I participated in the counter-attack near Goldap, which was meant to throw back the Russians. However, that action lasted only eight days.

**Q: Can you say something regarding Soviet atrocities against German civilians?**

**A:** I myself saw cases involving women who had been killed, their legs spread apart and sticks thrust in, and their breasts cut off ... I saw these things myself, in Pomerania.

I spoke about this on the radio, and described it. Dr. Goebbels asked me to describe this in detail, and he sent a radio team to interview me for that purpose. That was in the area around Stargard, where I saw this.

**Q: What of the Soviet „Asiatic“ troops?**

**A:** It was terrible. The soldiers who did those things were at the front ...Asians, Mongols, and so forth.

**Q: Were these atrocities part of conscious policy?**

**A:** These things were done very consciously. They sought, in this way, to break our so-called class or elite mentality.



**Q: Before you spoke of the Jewish commissars ...**

**A:** The problem was that in the Soviet army, in contrast to our army and all other armies, the Russians had political commissars who, along with the military commanders, had authority to give orders. Almost all of them were Jews.

For example, in this regard, I observed something in Tarnapol and in Zolochev, which are east of Lvov [in Ukraine], during the course of a very rapid and successful military offensive.

We had captured Zolochev and a couple of my tanks were stuck behind. The troops took a rest on the edge of the town because we didn't yet know if there would be an enemy counterattack or if we were to continue our own attack. I wanted to call back my tanks. Anyway, in that little town I saw small children who had been thrown out of windows, and I saw women lying on the street who had been beaten to death with clubs. They were Jews.

I called to a [local] woman, and she came into my vehicle. And she said to me: „I'll show you why we did this.“

We drove to the local prison. There was an area surrounded by a wall for the prisoners to walk around in. And in that area corpses were lying there this high ... The blood was still flowing from the corpses.

Just two hours earlier, as the Russians were leaving the town, they had used machine guns to kill all of the local Ukrainian nationalists who were prisoners there.

In this case as well, it was the Jewish commissars who had done this. And that's why the local Ukrainians had carried out pogroms against the Jews. And so, whenever a Ukrainian saw a Jew, he immediately killed him. But we were blamed for these deaths, even though we had no influence at all locally at that time. We weren't able to establish order until later.

**Q: Was this done on purpose to discredit the Germans?**

**A:** No, these anti-Jewish pogroms were an expression of the outrage of the people. They hated the Jews.

In Poland as well, there were often pogroms. As you may know, in Poland there were even pogroms against the Jews after the war. That was really something. The outrage of the people in the East against the Jews, who always portrayed themselves as decent people and good merchants, is indescribable.



We Germans did not have this hatred of Jews, of ordinary Jews. The Jews lived among us without any problem. We had the Nuremberg racial laws because we didn't want any racial mixing. In Israel, of course, such laws are even more strict. At the time, the Zionists welcomed the [German] racial laws, because they were in keeping with their outlook. The Zionists were against racial mixing. Instead, they wanted all the Jews to migrate to Israel.

**Q: What was Hitler like socially?**

**A:** He was a perfect host. When I was at Hitler's headquarters in the Wolfsschanze, I often observed that he would always pay special attention whenever anyone was scheduled to arrive as a guest.

And before he would meet a guest at the train station, he would always make sure that everything was just right in the headquarters.

He would check to see if the carpet did not match the silverware, or whatever, and he would drive everyone crazy making sure that everything was tastefully done in preparation for the guest. He had a real personal concern for his guests.

Hermann Geisler, Hitler's architect, wrote a book about Hitler. [This is *Ein anderer Hitler*, a memoir]. It's a fantastic book that you ought to read. He [the author] was a really great guy, and he could imitate very well, especially Robert Ley [head of the Reich Labor Service] and Hitler knew this. Hitler would urge him to imitate Ley's way of speaking. And he would [humorously] say: „My Führer, I can't do that, he'll put me in a concentration camp.“ „Ah, go ahead,“ Hitler would jokingly say, „I'll get you back out again.“ And that's what Hitler was like. And he would imitate Ley. [Remer imitates the imitation of Ley.] And Hitler would laugh so hard that tears came to his eyes.

**Q: What about Hitler's love life?**

**A:** Hitler had no time for that. He always said that he didn't have time for a wife. And Eva Braun played her part very well. No one knew about their relationship, which was kept private. She handled herself well when there were many guests around.

I don't think he was a great lover. I don't think so. He had a cousin, Geli Raubal, during the period of struggle before he became Chancellor. Hitler wasn't able to pay enough attention to her, but she loved him, and she took her own life. I think she was the only woman that Hitler really loved.



**Q: Did Hitler father any children?**

**A:** Nonsense. He didn't want any children.

Hitler thought of himself as a representative of the nation, and he rejected anything in his personal life that was inconsistent with that image. He always thought of himself as a statesman and he accordingly made very sure that his image was completely consistent with what the people expected of him.

**Q: And didn't the people want their Führer to have children?**

**A:** Yes, but for that he would have had to marry and become a husband. But he always said that he didn't have time for that.

I was with Hitler when he was just moving into his new headquarters, which was protected with concrete seven meters thick. And he entered his new bedroom where there was an ordinary soldier's bed there for him, except that it had two mattresses on it. And when he saw that, he curtly asked: Since when does a soldier sleep on two mattresses?" An adjutant present looked embarrassed, and then Hitler said: „You can take away one of them.“ And that's what Hitler was like. He did not ask for any special consideration for himself.

He paid for the entire defense perimeter around his general staff headquarters with his own money. He never received a penny of salary from the government. And until the end of the war, he paid for the defense perimeter himself, including the six kilometers of roadway, which cost a lot.

Hitler was a wealthy man, particularly from royalties from the sale of his book, *Mein Kampf*, which sold more than a hundred million copies. But he never took a penny of government money.

**Q: General Remer, you have called for German-Soviet cooperation. Can you tell us about that?**

**A:** We Germans must leave the NATO alliance. We must be militarily independent. We must create a nuclear-free zone. We must come to an understanding with the Russians. That is, we must obtain reasonable borders from the Russians. They are the only ones that can do that. The Americans don't have any influence at all in that regard.

In return, we will guarantee to buy [Russian] raw materials, and cooperate on hundreds of projects with the Russians, and that will eliminate our unemployment. All this has nothing to do with ideology. The Russians are so economically backward that they will readily and happily agree to this, and they'll be free of ideology.



**Q: How would the French react to this?**

**A:** France will have to work together with us. France is so much economically weaker than we are that it must trade with us in the West or not at all. The Americans are our mortal competitors.

**Q: Might not a German-Soviet alliance lead to war?**

**A:** No. On the contrary, we would prevent war. The Russians do not need a war. That's why Gorbachev makes his proposals. It's America that wants war.

**Q: Wouldn't America try to provoke hostilities?**

**A:** If we really come to an understanding with Russia, then it's all over for America.

Let me say frankly: the government of Adenauer [the first postwar West German chancellor] retained the entire wartime staff of Goebbels, and put them in government positions in Bonn. And as a result, the wartime anti-Communist outlook of Dr. Goebbels, which was quite proper during the war, was continued right up to the present. They were all Goebbels' people ... Who still really believes in Communism these days? We are really against Communism.

**Q: What role do Jews play in the Soviet Union?**

**A:** I can tell you that the Soviet leadership under Lenin was paid for by the Jews, who spent 220 million dollars. At that time, [German General] Ludendorff also gave Lenin money in order to end the war, and that was understandable.

Among the Soviet leaders at that time, 97 percent were Jews. And then Stalin came to power, and politicians who pursued a [non-ideological] policy in the interests of Russia, including the „Great Patriotic War“ [that is, the Second World War], which he won.

Stalin not only had millions killed who were on the periphery of power, such as peasants, but he also had 1.6 million of Lenin's followers, including Trotsky, systematically shot as well. And as a result, Russia today is regarded as the only country that is anti-Jewish or free of Zionist influence. We Germans ought to be glad for the rivalry between Washington and Moscow. We have to take advantage of these differences.



**Q: What sort of Jewish influence was there in the U.S.S.R. during the Second World War?**

**A:** After the war, many Jews were deported to the Ural area, and the Polish Jews fled. The Russians needed soldiers, and some of the Jews were used as partisans. And the Russians saw that the people didn't want them. They weren't happy with them, and they deported them. During the war we estimated that there were perhaps 1.8 million, or perhaps 2 million, I don't know for sure, Jews in the Soviet Union. There weren't that many.

**Q: And Jewish influence in the Soviet Union today?**

**A:** There are certainly [still] a few, but their influence has decreased drastically. In the Supreme Soviet today less than four percent are Jews, as opposed to 97 per cent [in Lenin's time]. So you can see how things have changed.

**Q: What of Jews in Soviet professional life?**

**A:** Yes, but they don't matter. They don't have any political influence.

**Q: Have you spoken with the Russians?**

**A:** Yes, I've spoken with the Soviet ambassador Valentyn Falin. I meet with him when I visit Bonn, or with the press secretary in Cologne. They welcome me, and we speak together as freely as you and I do here. It's completely normal for someone in political life to speak freely with his adversaries.

**Q: Do you think the Russians will really cooperate?**

**A:** For the time being, we don't count. We are not a political force. We can only act as a political factor when we are a political power.

I've written a pamphlet which I sent to Moscow and which I discussed with the Soviet embassy. They were in agreement and said that if all Germans thought like I do, political relations would be a lot simpler. However, [they said] we have to deal with Bonn, and because Bonn is in the NATO alliance, Bonn is our adversary. So that's the situation.

**Q: Why is the publication of your organization called *The Bismarck German*?**

**A:** That's because Bismarck pursued a policy oriented toward the East, and as a result of his „Reinsurance Treaty“ [1887] with Russia, we had 44 years of peace.



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### **About the Author**

Otto Ernst Remer (1912-1997) was a German soldier during the Second World War. In July 1944 he played a key role in putting down the conspiracy to murder Hitler and seize control of the German government. After the war Remer was an influential publicist and author, and for a time was active in German political life. He addressed the Eighth (1987) Conference of the Institute for Historical Review, where he spoke on „My Role in Berlin on July 20, 1944.“

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